

May 5th, 2009

Attn: The Honorable Mark Meadows

Attn: The Members of the House Judiciary Committee

Re: House Bills 4518, 4594, 4595, 4596

My name is Tammi Smith. I was 15yrs old when my half brother, Robert Sellon was murdered in the basement of a pool hall where he worked. The men that committed the crime were caught and prosecuted, Michael and David Samel. At the time of the crime they were only a mere 17yrs old but with the laws at that time, they were sentence as adults. I guess you could say that initially I was pleased with that decision. I had felt that that was justice. Since I have grown, I find that my thoughts about it have changed. In the case of David, he was sentenced to life without parole. How in the world could that benefit anyone not to mention the fact a young child? I truly have come to realize that when a young adult commits a crime, they are not fully aware of what it is they are doing. They are not in the mature frame of mind but as they grow older they can be rehabilitated to be responsible, respectful adults.

I have come to know both Michael & David and am willing to help them both in any way possible to see that they do not spend the rest of their lives in Prison. Since Michael has since been released, this is more towards David at this time.

I have spent numerous hours corresponding with David and have come to realize that this child sentenced as an adult has become an adult that wants to make his wrong right.

David has become a better person then the environment he was raised in and I believe that he deserves a second chance. In this instance and the situations of others, we have to ask ourselves, is throwing a child in prison for the rest of his life truly what's best for him/her? I do not believe that any one youth should be sentenced to LWOP.

I am a firm believer in a punishment for crimes but if there is a chance for a juvenile to learn from his/her mistakes to where they can become a valuable member of society, then I am all for it. Of course needs to be a support system in place to help him/her be all that he/she can be.

In our Prison system when there is overcrowding, the system skims off the top some of the lesser offenders. These offenders typically haven't spent that much time in our systems to learn from their mistakes, therefore they end up back in the system and it becomes a vicious cycle.

Why should we not consider the release of the David Samels' of the world? Those who have served 27 years of their life, those who applied themselves and have spent their time learning to become better people, those who I have come to know and believe that they are remorseful of their crimes. Why should we not give them a second chance at life?

Even though I am a victim of this crime against my brother, I feel that something better could come from all of this rather than having our youth put in a cell for the remainder of their lives. I am a supporter of a second chance for our youth offenders. I ask that you support the House Bills also and vote for this legislation.

If you have any questions and would like to contact me directly, feel free to do so.

Thank you for taking the time to review this.

Sincerely,

Tammi Smith

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